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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENT OBAMA'S TOKYO SPEECH

¶1. SUMMARY: On November 14 President Obama delivered a speech on Asian policy in Tokyo. The speech was the major news item of the day and received nearly universal praise for its consideration of Japan and for signaling a vigorous reengagement of the U.S. with Asia. According to Japanese public broadcaster NHK, which carried the speech live, the speech attracted nearly three times NHK's normal Saturday morning audience on its terrestrial channel and potentially reached up to 14 million households on its domestic satellite channel. END SUMMARY

¶2. President Obama's speech delivered in the morning of November 14 was carried live by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) and was the top news story, reported by all broadcasters the same afternoon and front-paged by all the evening editions of the major dailies. According to NHK, the speech attracted 3.7 million viewers on its terrestrial channel, a 5.7 percent audience share and nearly three times NHK's normal Saturday morning audience. Additionally, NHK's domestic satellite broadcast reached a potential audience of 14 million households. All of Japan's five national daily newspapers, with the exception of Sankei Shimbun, subsequently carried full Japanese translations of the speech, with Mainichi's translation appearing only on its website.

¶3. The choice of Tokyo as the venue of the speech was interpreted as part of the message that Japan remains an important ally of America. The liberal Mainichi noted in an editorial published on November 15, "the President underscored the value of the U.S.-Japan alliance and praised Japan's international contributions." The moderate Yomiuri said: "The President made it clear that the U.S.-Japan alliance will be a foundation for Washington's deeper engagement in Asia. President Obama and Prime Minister Hatoyama agreed during the summit to 'deepen' the bilateral alliance."

¶4. All local media outlets focused on President Obama's description of the U.S. as a "nation of the Pacific," noting that the address marked a clear departure from the former Bush administration's "disregard" of Asia, which in turn damaged America's presence in the region. The dailies treated the foreign policy address as equally significant as his two previous speeches in Cairo and Prague, although the liberal Tokyo Shimbun said it was different in not enunciating a grand vision.

¶5. Local media also echoed the view that the President would like to engage more deeply with Asia by using the U.S.-Japan alliance as a foundation, although the Hatoyama administration's initial policy toward the U.S., reflected by a delayed decision on Futenma relocation and the apparent exclusion of the United States in his East Asian Community initiative, appears to be complicating Washington's pursuit to re-emphasize its relationship with Asia. In fact, the media noted that the President's speech contained warnings for Japan. NHK, on its 7 p.m. news, said the President did not forget to send Japan a warning on the Futenma relocation issue by saying that the new bilateral working group will bring a swift

resolution of the issue. The Asahi, in its evening edition for November 14, interpreted the President's statement that the U.S. expects to be involved in discussions that shape the future of Asia and to participate fully in relevant organizations as a warning against the U.S.'s exclusion. The Mainichi editorial said: "The premier must exercise leadership in order to rebuild bilateral relations, which have begun to show signs of strain."

¶6. The media also argued that U.S. policy emphasis on Asia is a reflection of President Obama's diplomatic realism, noting that the President is well aware that Washington needs Chinese cooperation in dealing with mounting challenges such as global warming and that he sees Asia as imperative to restoring U.S. economic growth. The business-oriented Nikkei editorialized on November 15: "The President underscored his desire to change the flow of trade from Asia to the U.S. by increasing exports from the U.S. to Asia. The address reflected his strong desire to use the dynamism of Asia to rebuild the U.S. economy, as well as Washington's frustration with its declining national strength."

¶7. The media noted that the guests invited to the speech ranged from the mayor of Nagasaki and families of Japanese abducted by North Korea to members of the entertainment world. Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Tanoue, who attended, was reported as saying he "was deeply touched." Sakie Yokota, mother of abductee Megumi Yokota, remarked that the President "is a person with a strong commitment to human rights." The Asahi noted in an article on November 14 that the "variety of guests itself speaks for the President's message."

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